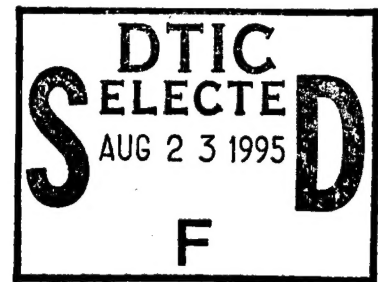


NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, Rhode Island



OBSCURING VICTORY AND DEFEAT
THE VIETNAMESE TET OFFENSIVE:

AN OPERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

by

G. Paul Kish
Commander, United States Navy

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "G. Paul Kish".

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PREFACE

Vietnam is still with us. It has created doubts about American judgement, about American credibility, about American power--not only at home, but throughout the world. It has poisoned our domestic debate. So we paid an exorbitant price for the decisions that were made in good faith and for good purpose.¹

--Henry Kissinger

For nearly three decades the legacy of American involvement in Vietnam has gripped this nation's conscience. Our longest war, its' impact transcended virtually all American agendas. No other event in this century so definitively redirected our political, economic, social, humanitarian, diplomatic, media and moral focus. Follow-on comparisons to the Vietnam War have been the centerpiece of each and every debate regarding the use of our political-military might.

Emotions have persistently run high in both those who served in Vietnam and those who questioned their governments' aims. Volumes have been written on many aspects of the war yet perceptions that only now, 25 years after the fall of Saigon, are Americans willing to begin to come to terms with our only military defeat.

The lessons drawn from the Vietnam War are nearly as numerous as the perspectives in which they have originated. Considering the majority of the legacy of Vietnam seems to be told from an American point of view it now may be less contentious to consider and learn from previously passion-encumbered perspectives.

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ABSTRACT

THE TET OFFENSIVE: AN OPERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

This case study analyzes the role of operational art in irregular actions directed against American/South Vietnamese forces during the early months of 1968. Initiated to coincide with the celebration of the Lunar New Year of the Monkey or Tet, it is considered by most historical accounts as the turning point of the Vietnam War.

Tet was a deceptively orchestrated military operation--it involved synchronized tactical engagements against nearly every South Vietnamese city and town in violation of a Communist sought holiday truce (figure 1). Although not without precedent in Vietnamese history², the magnitude of the offensive defies historical comparisons.

Political compromise and military stalemate drove the decision by the North Vietnamese to proceed with Tet. At the strategic level of war, the intention of the campaign plan was to gain the initiative and win the war. It correctly established the enemy's (allied) center of gravity, however, one false assumption doomed the operation from the start. The resultant failure to adequately assess "means" or hedge the plan with branches and sequels made Tet a showcase of failure at the operational level of war.

In combining both their political and military warfighting doctrines to strike a decisive blow against the Americans and

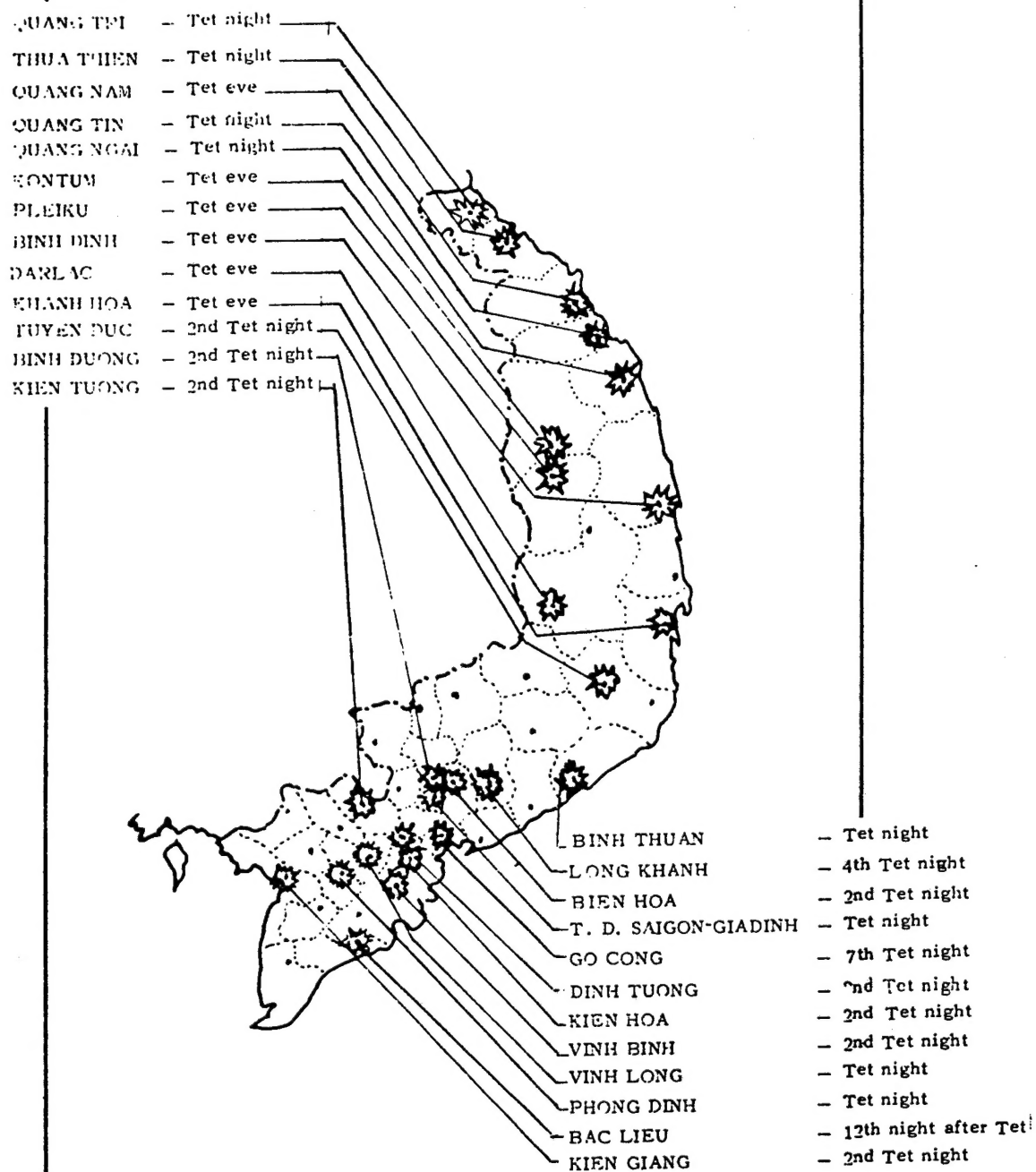
their South Vietnamese "puppets", Tet's complexity and decentralized control made unity of effort extremely difficult.

Unquestionably a Communist military disaster of Napoleonic magnitude, in Tet's aftermath emerged a strange dichotomy in determining victor and vanquished. In reality, the near total annihilation of Communist-backed Viet Cong forces during Tet rivaled the Battle of Midway in decisiveness, had it only been likewise exploited. In truth as perceived by Americans, the complete surprise and scope of the offensive carried the impact of another Pearl Harbor. Yet unlike Pearl Harbor, the shocked reactions at home galvanized the American people against the war not against the enemy. Strangely, the Tet Offensive was both a victory and a defeat for both nations.

Breaking the mold in thinking of potential enemies dressed in uniforms, employing conventional warfare against us may be of more benefit to our national security than an Army division, Air Force fighter wing or Navy carrier.³

Although much of the material documenting the events of Tet were written by Americans, a concerted effort was made to include sources from a Vietnamese perspective to develop the conclusions in this paper. Several of the works of Tet's principal strategist, General Vo Nguyen Giap, were reviewed as well as an excellent two volume work by Colonel Pham Van Son, a South Vietnamese military historian.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS OF SOUTH VIET NAM



CITIES ATTACKED BY VIET CONG DURING TET (1968)

THE TET OFFENSIVE:
AN OPERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

If the strategy be wrong, the skill of the general on the battlefield, the valor of the soldier, the brilliancy of victory, however otherwise decisive, fail of their effect.¹

Alfred Thayer Mahan

The United States became involved in Vietnam long before the majority of Americans could locate it on a map. Although fundamentally against France's designs to recolonize Vietnam following World War II, the U. S. funded nearly 80 percent of their efforts in the First Indo-China War (1945-1954) in an attempt to prevent an additional, fragilely-governed European nation from falling to the Communists.

As early as 1959 the first American advisors were in Vietnam supporting our anti-communism policy of containment. Ultimately the U. S. became committed in Vietnam when the first combat troops arrived, coincidentally, on my eleventh birthday, March 8, 1965. "Even by American estimates, the Republic of Vietnam was only weeks away from collapse when the arrival of American combat troops turned the tide."⁵

Following the Americans' arrival, the Vietnam issue in years leading up to the tumultuous 1968 was "less than front page material". Statistically, less than 13,000 of America's total of 58,000 casualties were listed at that point. Prophetically, a 20 October 1965 New York Times article on Hanoi's political warfare strategy stated: "Communist hopes for

victory in Vietnam now turn more on American withdrawal through exhaustion or in response to the pressures of public opinion rather than on conventional military success."

Prior to that eventful year marked by the seizure of the USS Pueblo by North Korea, the assassinations of both Senator Robert Kennedy and Reverend Martin Luther King, and the riots outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, a conclusion to the Vietnam War was not in sight.

DIEN BIEN PHU

The similarities and connection between the Tet Offensive and the decisive engagement of the First Indo-China War necessitates the reader's understanding of the battle pitting French and Vietnamese forces at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. The principal strategist in each of these major Communist operations was General Vo Nguyen Giap.

After eight years of conflict and at the cost of nearly 100 thousand French soldiers killed, General Giap was cognizant of the ebbing support the French people held for *la sale guerre*, "the dirty war". He also understood the impact that a Vietminh victory might have at the conference table during the upcoming Geneva Conference.

At his discretion, in time and place, Giap laid siege to the remote, indefensible valley encampment, painstakingly maintaining the surrounding high ground. Through skillful concealment of his intentions and capabilities, Giap's use of maneuver succeeded in a numerical superiority as well,

outnumbering the French by a ratio of more than ten to one.

The deliberate use of diversionary actions at distant locations to confound reinforcements, a herculean effort by the Vietnamese to emplace artillery in the hills, and the French "disregard of intelligence that did not fit their prejudices"⁶ combined to form a stunning Communist victory. "Giap's timing was perfect. On the afternoon of May 7, 1954, the Vietminh's red flag went up over the French command bunker at Dien Bien Phu. The next morning in Geneva...the discussions of the Indo-china problem opened."⁷

That the Vietminh had three times the casualties was immaterial. The French lost the war in a single battle which held disproportionate psychological and diplomatic consequences. "The decisive engagement of the First Indochina War left deep marks on Vietnamese Communist thinking and played an important and instructive part in the making of Tet."⁸

PEOPLE'S WAR, PEOPLE'S ARMY

Study the enemy carefully, never forgetting his peculiar characteristics, never ignoring our own fighting characteristics, always acting on the basis of the Party's military reasoning--this is the correct scientific way of doing things; this is in accordance with Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Analyze, ponder, conform to the principles of People's war and the reality of the situation--this is the way to win.

Vo Nguyen Giap ⁹

Borrowing the Chinese Three-Stage Strategy of Revolutionary War, General Giap modified its' applications to suit the National Liberation Front (NLF) in South Vietnam and in particular, to combat his much superior enemy. By design of Mao

Tse-tung, the spectrum of people's war begins with guerrilla activities in a revolutionary context, then proceeds to full-scale civil war and culminates in a general people-military uprising/offensive.

For purposes of this essay, it is simpler and sufficient to state that interwoven throughout each stage are political, military and diplomatic options. Inherent and critical to the doctrine is a crescendo of combat. What General Giap added to Mao's strategy was meticulous attention to logistics, unique organizational skills and a keen ability to draw countertactics from his perceptions of the enemy. "Giap's strategy generally has been characterized by flexibility, surprise and an indifference to heavy losses to his own troops."¹⁰

CHAPTER 2 THE DECISION

Thus what is of extreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy. The next best thing is to disrupt his alliances. The next best thing [third] is to attack his army. The worst policy is to attack cities. Attack cities only when there is no alternative.

Sun Tzu ¹¹

By the Summer of 1967, after nearly 27 months of sporadic sometimes heavy fighting, the mounting numbers of casualties began to drive a wedge between war aims and strategy. The growing perception among political leaders was that without an offensive capability, an inevitable reduction in momentum would make futile, the hard-earned gains to-date. Debates over strategy became more commonplace. There was even a cadre of

officials opposed to continuing the war. Within the army, combat logistics was deteriorating and among the people, concerns over their morale increased. Stalemate, not the end to the war, was thrust into view.

The debate over strategy revolved around opposing views from the South and North; advocated by General Nguyen Chi Thanh and General Giap, respectively. Thanh had been the architect of the Viet Cong's 1962 transition to the second phase of people's war, incorporating effective large unit attacks against South Vietnamese forces. His strategy would have proven decisive except for the timely arrival of American combat troops. In large measure, Thanh's strategy was being blamed for producing the situation where neither side held the initiative.

General Giap and his supporters argued for increased emphasis on using all the military, political and diplomatic weapons within the Communist arsenal. Emphasizing People's War attributes of speed, deception and surprise, Giap designed a strategy that combined VC guerrilla tactics with NVA and VC main-force unit engagements.

"Appear at places to which he must hasten; move swiftly where he does not expect you."¹² "Take him unaware by surprise attacks where he is unprepared. Hit him suddenly with shock troops."¹³

The culmination of Giap's all-out attack would be the pinnacle of Communist warfighting doctrine--the general uprising among the Southern population.

Although no record could be found that General Giap was a student of the renowned Chinese philosopher, the framework of

his strategies appear anchored by many Sun Tzu proverbs. Giap's coordinated campaign would conceivably attack the progressive American offensive strategy by concentrating Communist attacks on the weaker Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). The focus would be to disintegrate their vulnerable alliance. It would end the Communist reliance on controlling the countryside and take the fight to the enemy's stronghold, the cities.

Confident in the theory of mass while discounting the principal of economy of force, Giap's proposal hinged on the assumption that poor conditions within South Vietnam would invoke the people to revolt and the army to lay down their weapons. Creating shock in the majority of cities in South Vietnam was crucial to instigating the peoples' uprising.

When an American B-52 raid near the Cambodian/Vietnam border presumably killed General Thanh, so too died the longstanding debate over leaders' course should North Vietnam follow.¹⁴ "[I]n an ironic twist Thanh's funeral also supplied the pretext for a meeting between North Vietnamese officials who ultimately adopted the prescriptions of his opponents."¹⁵ The strategy toward executing the Tet Offensive was agreed upon in Hanoi in June 1967.

CHAPTER 3 PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Plans and projects for harming the enemy are not confined to any one method. Sometimes entice his wise virtuous men away so that he has no counselors. Or send treacherous people to his country to wreck his administration. Sometimes use cunning deceptions to alienate his ministers from the sovereign.

Sun Tzu 16

COMMAND RELATIONSHIPS

The death of Thanh did much more to affect Tet than silence its' opposition. It had a profound effect on its' execution as well. In overall command was General Giap. Thanh's responsibilities in the South were shared by Generals Tran Do and Tran Va Tra. The former being a staunch Thanh follower. Complicating unity of command, the two 'in theatre' generals from 'split camps' fostered an adversarial relationship among the various elements essential to success.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

From an 'operational art' perspective, a major flaw of the Tet Offensive was its' failure to create unity of effort. The plan's operational aimpoint--severing the Allied alliance predominantly by political means was clearly defined, however, exactly how the operation was to produce the desired result was never fully coordinated. The unbalanced need for maintaining secrecy eventually conflicted with the campaign's culminating point--the general uprising. "Publicity, not secrecy was needed to inform Communist forces and even the South Vietnamese population that the turning point in the war was on the horizon." 17

PLANNING

Once the North Vietnamese Politburo sanctioned Resolution 13 as the strategy for "victory in the shortest possible time",¹⁸ Giap set his plan to motion.

There would be three mutually supporting phases. The first

action would be directed toward drawing U.S. forces away from the cities and inflicting on them heavy casualties in large scale attacks. As the cities became less of a sanctuary, guerrilla forces would rise up to destroy the "puppet troops" by simultaneous assaults against key objectives in Phase II. Meanwhile, the steady infiltration of the political cadre would facilitate, at the appropriate time, the people rising up to seize state powers during Phase III. Although widespread terror in the South was desired, special emphasis would be given to the capital, Saigon, and the revered ancient city of Hue.

PREPARATION

As they often misunderstood the "signals" from the VC, Americans interpreted their relative inactivity during the last half of 1967 as testimony in support of U.S. strategy--not preparation for an all-out offensive. This misperception likely sparked General Westmoreland's optimistic speeches during his visit to Washington just months prior to Tet. The complete 'reversal of fortunes' subsequently portrayed in Tet's aftermath on televisions across America is undoubtedly what transformed tactical victory into political defeat.

In reality, the VC were never more active. Their tasks included a complete reorganization of military districts to more appropriately align them with political areas, redeployment of forces, increased infiltration of men and weapons, modernization of armament and specialized training in street fighting.

The systematic Southward infiltration of weapons, men and

spies were indicative of VC tenacity and shrewdness.

"In 1967, an average of 7,000 men infiltrated from North Vietnam into the South each month. The figure for January 1968 only rose to 22,000 men."¹⁹ In comparison, between 1959-1964 a paltry total of 20,000 men were infiltrated.

A steady stream of weapons were smuggled into and painstakingly hid adjacent target cities. Many were hidden in graveyards and sandpits to easily dig them up when needed. A common practice was to load weapons on trucks underneath the festive cargoes of the holiday (such as watermelons). To their credit, not a single case of arms smuggling was exposed.

Thousands of VC entered cities in civilian clothes, many of them "intellectuals" to create the cultural/political front required for general uprising. To gain knowledge about chosen targets many women were cast into their roles without actually knowing their overall purpose.

Heightened propaganda exaggerating the poor state of the Hanoi government and rumors of a U.S. pullout formed a foundation for the political front. Astoundingly, even a rumor of a VC-U.S. collaboration had some credence with nearly 40% of the population in Saigon.²⁰

Programs labeled "Golden Opportunity" and the "10 Point Policy" had specific purposes in convincing ARVN soldiers to turn on their units or offered incentives to those that would point out local officials, respectively. Numerous attempts were made to capture senior ARVN officers to later press them into

ordering their troops to quit fighting.

The December 29th "conciliation" to begin peace negotiations by the North Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Nguyen Duy Trinh, served to usher the U.S. toward a weaker bargaining position in 'Dien Bien Phu fashion'. The preparations for Tet were summed best by their military leader, "any and all means are justified to attain desired ends without regard for stupid scruples about benevolence, righteousness and morality."²¹

CHAPTER 4 OPERATIONS: "BEFORE THE DEATH OF UNCLE HO"

PHASE ONE

The focus of Tet's initial phase was to isolate ARVN forces by drawing the Americans out into the countryside. Like the overall offensives' objective, phase I was "successful" yet not as General Giap intended.

During the months preceding Tet the North Vietnamese attempted to divert U.S. attentions towards the DMZ by conducting large scale attacks at Loc Ninh and Dak To. The latter lasted 22 days and served as a test case to see how effectively the NVA/VC regulars would "stack up" against American firepower, whether Washington would be forthcoming with more troops as a result and to test the tactics for use in the Tet attacks. The sacrifices in direct battle casualties were comparatively staggering for the NVA, though unaffected the commitment for Tet. The mounting losses sustained by the Communists were consistent with America's image of a beaten foe. It gave credibility to the ruse to begin negotiations and the VC

declaration to seek observance of a seven-day Tet truce, the longest cease-fire proposed.

On 20 January the 'defining event of Tet'--the attack of Khe Sanh--"began with a vengeance."²² Two NVA divisions including artillery and armor regiments plus two additional divisions in reserve surrounded the remote American base.

"It is difficult to overestimate the impact of the attack... the assault gave Khe Sanh priority over every other [U.S.] military operation."²³ The mesmerization by American leaders to prevent another Dien Bien Phu unwittingly played into Giap's scheme. "For example, Westmoreland cabled Washington: 'I believe that the enemy sees a similarity between our base at Khe Sanh and Dien Bien Phu and hopes, by following a pattern of activity similar to that used against the French, to gain similar military and political ends.'"²⁴ Even "a sand model of Khe Sanh and the surrounding countryside was erected in the White House situation room."²⁵ At battles' end the Communists' dead exceeded 10,000 with American losses less than 500.²⁶ Moreover in North Vietnam's view, the stage was now set for Tet.

PHASE TWO

At 1800 29 January the Allied cease-fire took effect in all of South Vietnam except for areas near Khe Sanh. ARVN forces that had just 30 days before assumed security responsibilities for all cities and towns were at a 50% holiday manning posture.

The Tet attacks were scheduled to begin at 0300 on the morning of 30 January. The difficulties that some units

experienced in reaching their massing points forced a decision for a 24 hour postponement. A few Communist headquarters failed to pass the delaying orders to their units and major premature attacks against the province capitals of Pleiku, Khanh Hoa, Darlac and Quang Tri were initiated without coordination at the original 'H' hour. Although centrally planned and fastidiously prepared, Tet's decentralized execution relied too heavily on initiative and small-unit leadership.

Despite the early attacks, subsequent cancellation of the truce and urgent broadcasts for all ARVN troops on leave to return to their units, country-wide VC attacks early the following morning achieved unprecedented surprise.

Avoiding American facilities, when feasible, throughout the South administrative centers, ARVN headquarters, arsenals, airbases, television and radio stations, and ARVN military units were systematically attacked. VC guerrillas dressed in ARVN uniforms would fire on ARVN troops to feign compliances with their prior propaganda efforts and add considerable confusion to the enemy's solution. Prisons were attacked and released prisoners were given weapons to further perceptions that a Communist general uprising had succeeded.

Uncontrollably launching the "total war" phase of "Peoples' War" irrevocably replaced the current strategy to "occupy the countryside to encircle the cities" with "occupy the cities to liberate the countryside"²⁷. Believing their own claims that the final victory was near at hand, many VC guerrillas burned

their jungle hideouts before venturing toward the cities. When the peoples' uprising didn't materialize and the offensive failed to be the decisive instrument anticipated, surviving VC had no sanctuaries to return to. Tet held no alternatives.

"Probably the worst and definitely the most spectacular fighting took place within and around Saigon and Hue."²⁸ Hue, in particular, was chosen for concentrated attacks in view of it being home to several anti-government movements and the significance of a Communist victory there. Nearly 5,000 civilian dead or missing in Hue alone attest to Communists' wrath when the uprising fizzled.

In Saigon, the most significant event was likely, in comparison, the most benign yet the most covered by reporters. The attack on the American Embassy failed even to penetrate the inner walls of the compound but a few misrepresentations by journalists ultimately contrived the "fatal blow" to American perceptions of the war. In the days following, chaos would prevail in Saigon and, unfortunately, one newsreel would "define" the conditions in South Vietnam as a result of Tet (see figure 2).

The immense preparation over nine months, tens of thousands of lives, boldness, deception and surprise could not ensure Tet's success over its' incorrect assumption. The South Vietnamese people and its' army held fast against Communist "liberation". They withstood the onslaught and atrocities, the chaos and the confusion. It is a travesty that their ally, likewise, did not.

CHAPTER 5 OPERATIONAL LESSONS LEARNED

"The record shows that winners, by and large, heed the Principles [of war]. The losers, by and large, do not." ²⁹

By definition, the aim at the operational level of war is for every tactical action, battle and engagement to contribute directly to operational objectives--which in turn support strategic objectives. Incredibly during Tet, with every tactical defeat, Communist operational objectives were cumulatively achieved. Conversely, each American tactical victory contributed little towards attaining their respective aims or preventing their ultimate defeat. One explanation is that Tet may provide history the unique contradiction to the above premises linking "winners/objectives" and "the principles of war". An alternative and more conventional view is that because neither nation held inviolable the principles of war, decades later we are still struggling to declare Tet's winner and loser...

A clear objective must be established. Regardless of where on the spectrum of warfare you engage, both the military and political conditions for accomplishing the mission must be clearly understood prior to embarking upon a military operation.

Link between ends and means It is ill-conceived to expect sufficient forces to accomplish the mission based on an assumption within the operational scheme.

Supporting objectives The establishment of intermediate

tactical objectives must be incorporated by operational commanders to support operational objectives.

Unity of effort is essential Regardless of your usage of the terms joint and combined operations, coordination is absolutely necessary.

Center of Gravity However accurately it is predetermined, focusing an operation on the enemy's source of strength--center of gravity--regardless of one's own vulnerabilities and shortcomings invites disaster. Impacting the enemy's will to fight may sometimes be influenced more by relative differences in cultures than by operational design.

Phasing Commanders must include branches and sequels to adjust operations based on previous outcomes. Each phase must have an enabling objective.

Surprise/Deception The proverbial "dual edged sword", each are subject to hindering ones' own as much as they confound the enemy, particularly without unity of command/effort.

Time, Space, Casualties and Our Will to Fight Americans' definitions and intolerances for time, space and casualties during war "began" in Vietnam. Potential enemies are cognizant of our views and their impact on our fortitude. With perceived public "standards" shrinking to weeks/months stacked against adversaries' decades/generations, politicians must appreciate the reasons and the importance of joining the next potential fight.



25, 26. The pictures that shocked the world: South Vietnamese police chief Nguyen Ngoc Loan executing a Viet Cong suspect on the street in Saigon. The Associated Press photo above was blazoned across America's front pages. The NBC-Television film footage at right, originally in color, brought the cruelty of the war into the nation's living rooms.

CASUALTIES OF TET ³⁰
FEB-MAR 1968

	<u>ARVN</u>	<u>U.S.</u>	<u>NVA/VC</u>	<u>CIVILIAN</u>
<u>KIA/CAPTURED</u>	4,694	4,124	58,373/ 9,461	14,300*
<u>WOUNDED</u>	15,097	19,285		24,000*
<u>MIA</u>	626	604		
<u>WEAPONS LOST</u>	2,343		17,439	
<u>AIRCRAFT LOST</u>		#337		

* APPROXIMATED

DOES NOT INCLUDE 215 AIRCRAFT SLIGHTLY DAMAGED

NOTE: NOT INSIGNIFICANT AS FAR AS THE PROSECUTION OF THE WAR, AMONG THE "CASUALTIES" OF THE ALLIES DURING THE TET OFFENSIVE WERE THE CHANGES IT BROUGHT IN U.S. BOMBING STRATEGY, PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S DECISION TO NOT SEEK REELECTION AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE POLARIZATION OF AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION AGAINST THE WAR.

figure 3

ENDNOTES

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- ¹ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Viking Press, 1983) p. 9.
 - ² For an explanation of significant historical precedents regarding Tet see Don Oberdorfer, *Tet! The Turning Point of the Vietnam War* (New York: Da Capo, 1983) p. 71.
 - ³ Particularly following the American led victory in the Gulf War potential adversaries will be more likely to employ non-conventional strategies to negate overwhelming U.S. firepower and technology.
 - ⁴ John M. Collins, *The Vietnam War in Perspective* (Washington DC: The National War College, 1972) p. 1.
 - ⁵ Peter Braestrup, *Big Story* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1983) p. 10.
 - ⁶ Karnow, p. 194.
 - ⁷ Ibid., p. 198.
 - ⁸ Oberdorfer, p. 49.
 - ⁹ David Elliott, *Analysis of Communist Strategy During Tet* (New York: Cornell University, 1981) p. 15
 - ¹⁰ Braestrup, p. 4.
 - ¹¹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971) p. 77-78.
 - ¹² Ibid., p. 96.
 - ¹³ Ibid., p. 133
 - ¹⁴ The North Vietnamese have denied that General Tranh was killed by an American bomber, in fact, several different sources do not agree on his cause of death yet all concur in placing the time in about June 1967.
 - ¹⁵ James J. Wirtz, *The Tet Offensive: Intelligence Failure in War* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1991) p. 52.
 - ¹⁶ Sun Tzu, p. 113-114.

- 17 Wirtz, p. 69.
- 18 Oberdorfer, p. 51.
- 19 Pham Zan Son, Tet-1968: The Communist Offensive That Marked the Beginning of America's Defeat in Vietnam, Volume I (Salisbury NC: Documentary Publications, 1980) p. 451
- 20 Victoria Pohle, The Viet Cong in Saigon: Tactics and Objectives During the Tet Offensive (Santa Monica CA: The Rand Corporation, 1969) p. 43.
- 21 Elliott, p. 17.
- 22 Wirtz, p. 204.
- 23 Ibid., p. 204.
- 24 Ibid., p. 205.
- 25 Ibid., p. 205.
- 26 For synopsis of casualties during Tet see figure 3.
- 27 Pham Van Son, p. 451.
- 28 Wirtz, p. 228.
- 29 Collins, p. 28
- 30 Pham Von Son, p. 55.

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